

2011 Heart Failure Programs Staffing Profile survey results released

April 4 2011

The American College of Cardiology Foundation (ACCF), American Heart Association (AHA) and the Heart Failure Society of America (HFSA) today released results of a recently conducted survey to determine the current staffing environment of heart failure (HF) clinics and offices focused on heart transplants.

One in eight deaths in the United States is a result of [heart failure](#) and the HF patient population is growing, both in the United States and internationally. Historically, there have been no published recommendations about the staffing needs for health centers that focus on either HF and/or [heart transplant](#). The goal of this online, jointly-sponsored survey, conducted among the memberships of the three organizations who had identified themselves as interested in HF, heart transplant, or both, was to understand the current staffing environments of HF, transplant and mechanical circulatory support device (MCS) programs in the United States and abroad.

"Heart failure and transplant/VAD (Ventricular Assist Device) programs around the country and the world are struggling to find the right mix of clinicians and other health professionals to manage this increasing population of patients with heart failure," said Mariell Jessup, M.D., professor of medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, associate chief – Clinical Affairs, Cardiovascular Division of Medicine, medical director of the Heart and Vascular Center at Penn Medicine, and lead author of the report. "There is likewise an increased scrutiny of heart failure care, policies and quality in the United States. Thus, there are

many questions and concerns about the types of clinicians needed to deliver cost-effective and optimal care."

According to Jessup, this is the first survey of this kind, to the three organizations' collective knowledge, and was created to answer questions about appropriate staff numbers for heart failure and transplant programs.

Among the key findings of the survey was the conclusion that staff ratios of physicians, nurses and advanced nurse practitioners stayed the same as programs grew in size, indicating that the health care professionals who provide the highly skilled, specialized and time-consuming care to this population are under constant and intense scrutiny trying to meet quality improvement initiatives and with reduced financial resources. Other survey findings concluded that more VADs are currently being done than heart transplants and the majority of programs currently in place had relatively small staffs.

"This survey attempted to understand what the current staffing levels of such programs are and what the numbers of patients cared for by these staff were," said Jessup. As a result, she and her colleagues believe that the results can be viewed as the first step towards establishing standards for staff ratios.

The report, "ACCF/AHA/HFSA Survey Results: Current Staffing Profile of Heart Failure Programs, Including Programs That Perform Heart Transplant and Mechanical Circulatory Support Device Implantation," will be published in the May 17, 2011, issue of the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*, as well as *Circulation: Journal of the American Heart Association* and the May 2011 issue of the *Journal of Cardiac Failure*.

Provided by American College of Cardiology

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